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ABSTRACT

The San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative is an attempt to integrate the work of practitioners, researchers, and community members to meet the individual needs of each group while providing programmatic, practical research findings to district officials. This paper discusses issues pertaining to the development of a research cooperative: the individual needs of research cooperative participants, and the risks and benefits involved in establishing a cooperative relationship between practitioners, researchers, and community members. Further, this paper provides background information that offers assistance to other districts interested in pursuing this idea. Appended examples of documents presently occurring in the development of San Diego's research cooperative include: "Formation of a Research Cooperative" outlining the proposed structure of the research cooperative and "Research Agenda from the Task Force on the Achievement of Hispanic Students" describing a working draft produced by cooperative members. Although the results are not in yet, the initial developmental stages of the San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative have been positive and encouraging (PN)

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SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS' RESEARCH COOPERATIVE: A MARRIAGE OF PRACTITIONERS, RESEARCHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative: A Marriage of Practitioners, Researchers and Community Members

Educational practitioners - teachers, principals, central office personnel and others directly associated with the instructional process - spend their professional lives devising ways to improve schools. Educational researchers generally see themselves pursuing that same goal - improving education. The same can be said of community members and advocacy groups who are involved actively in the operation of schools. These three groups spend a large amount of time working to improve education, yet they seldom work together on their common purpose. The San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative is an attempt to integrate the work of practitioners, researchers, and community members to meet the individual needs of each group while providing programmatic, practical research findings to district officials.

San Diego City Schools entered into this endeavor for several reasons. District leadership has a predisposition to use educational research. Research findings that can contribute to a debate on specific programs or district policies are encouraged. The Superintendent and Board of Education want to involve the research community and local advocacy groups in investigations that ultimately will serve to improve the city schools. This willingness is translated into an acceptance of studies which not only document the successes within the district, but shows where improvements and changes are necessary. The development of a research cooperative invites individuals other than district staff to participate in this type of examination.

Other reasons for establishing a research cooperative include expanding the district's limited resources allotted to educational research. The Research Department of San Diego City Schools does not have the resources or personnel to address the many areas of investigation that need to be studied. At the same time, the district receives numerous research proposals requesting access to the city schools. A process to coordinate the efforts of researchers with the needs of the community and the district serves to produce practical research findings. Able assistance in reviewing proposals the district receives by those other than educational practitioners contributes to the acceptance of quality projects that reflect the needs of the community.

Another important prerequisite for a district interested in developing a research cooperative is to have a university in close proximity. San Diego is fortunate to have six local universities, each quite interested in doing educational research and improving the local public schools. Their enthusiasm coupled with the enthusiasm and involvement of community groups is essential to help build a cooperative relationship.

This paper discusses several issues pertaining to the development of a research cooperative. The individual needs of research cooperative participants, and the risks and benefits involved in establishing a cooperative relationship between practitioners, researchers, and community members are presented. The intent of the paper is to provide background information that offers assistance to other districts interested in pursuing this idea. Examples of the work presently occurring in the development of San Diego's research cooperative are presented in the appendix. The first document (A-1) entitled "Formation of a Research Cooperative" was prepared

in October 1984 as an initial working paper outlining the proposed structure of the research cooperative. The second piece (A-2) entitled "Research Agenda from the Task Force on the Achievement of Hispanic Students" is a working draft produced through the combined effort of practitioners, researchers, and community members. This outline, completed in March 1985, is representative of more than thirty individuals' work in over nine hours of meetings.

Why is there a need for a Research Cooperative?

A school district can fulfill several needs through a research cooperative. A forward-looking district needs to invest time in gathering information that addresses issues of importance. Practical research which identifies problems and offers recommendations in a sophisticated professional manner assists a district in developing programs appropriate to its needs. Research questions also surface through site personnel, who in working directly with young people are able to suggest specific areas of investigation within their arena. In each of these cases, a public school system is limited in its ability to meet these needs. Research staffs in large urban districts very often are small in size, if existent at all. A large urban district, with a diverse population, faces the dilemma of meeting its research needs without adequate resources available.

At the same time, school systems receive numerous research proposals from educational researchers and graduate students. A research staff within a school system will have limited expertise relative to the wide range of proposals received. Moreover, the range of research topics may be so wide that the direct benefit to the district from the specific research findings

is quite minimal. A system which can identify areas of investigation geared toward practical problems serves to meet this need. Shared responsibility in the review of proposals, especially by experts from specified research fields, professional educators, and individuals who will be affected by the research findings can help to contribute to practical research reports. A research cooperative which can meet these needs serves a district well.

The research community also is served through the development of this type of relationship. Professors, graduate students and research assistants have the desire to do research and carry out examinations of scientific merit. Researchers also have the desire to contribute, not only to the research community, but to the community at large. The need to balance the scientific integrity of a work with its practical application at the district or site level is provided through the interaction of members of a research cooperative. The establishment of a research cooperative indicates to the research community that a district is willing to invite researchers to investigate and study district practices. The researcher needs access to information, research subjects and data which are easier to obtain through a coordinated process supported by the Cooperative.

Community members and advocacy groups many times are left out of the research processes of a school district. Yet, the questions and concerns which they raise in actuality are many of the more important research questions proposed. Those citizens who are active in the public schools have the need to see that the interest of their children and their communities are served by the schools. The district and the research community must stay in touch with the needs of the community if the work that

is to be accomplished is meant to have some sort of applicability. The research cooperative mechanism provides an avenue for these needs to be expressed in an area where interaction is minimal. Educational research meshed with community interests provides a balanced approach of science and practical applicability within a large district.

What are the risks involved in developing a Research Cooperative?

The development of a research cooperative involves a degree of risk taking from all participants. A school district must allow researchers and members of the community to become more directly involved in district research processes. The district must give researchers the opportunity to publish what the researchers think is correct without constraint. The areas of research can include topics that a district traditionally may consider sensitive. School districts often tend to soften potentially harmful findings before they are released. This is incompatible with scientific inquiry and the spirit behind a research cooperative. A district must be willing to allow unfettered reporting of school policies and practices for a research cooperative to succeed.

Research proposals usually are screened by school officials for their scientific merit and practical application to district programs. A district risks developing a review process within the research cooperative that may go beyond its control, especially when the process has traditionally been under its control. A district also risks establishing high expectations that may or may not be achieved. The cooperative nature of this process would tend to distribute the risk among all participants, but the district as initiator runs the greatest risk of creating unachievable promises.

A district also risks harming students. The population of students for whom most valuable research would be directed on many occasions includes those students who cannot afford the loss of time from instruction. District representation in the cooperative must be the "check" to ensure that disruptions of instructional time are kept to a minimum.

The researchers' investment in the cooperative must include a belief that the district will allow research, even potentially controversial research, to take place. The researchers, as well as the community members, run the risk of investing time and energy into the development of the cooperative without any return on that investment. Expectations are naturally high for a program such as this, yet all the parties risk the chance that results may not be delivered. The early stages of development are full of enthusiasm. As the cooperative evolves there are difficulties in keeping communication frequent and open between all involved parties. It becomes necessary to establish certain procedures and rules as new ground is broken. The risk involved is that a new bureaucratic structure is formed that becomes less responsive to the initial enthusiasm and more responsive to the rules being established. The challenge is to create a structure which is responsive to both and ultimately meets the original high expectations.

What are the Benefits to a Research Cooperative?

The benefit which arises from allowing research to occur in this manner is that the recommendations and results will be considered credible. Policy recommendations with a research cooperative's endorsement will carry much more strength in front of a board of education than that of the independent research project. The involvement of three broad groups in the research

process also ensures that the concerns and needs of the groups are addressed. Site personnel, community advocates, and researchers work together to propose improvements to the schools. The cooperation, enthusiasm and working relationships which evolve have positive outcomes beyond those which can easily be documented.

Direct benefits to a district include extending resources to do the work that is necessary to be accomplished. A district can coordinate the research proposal application process so the studies carried out address areas of need that are of importance to district personnel. The assistance in the review of proposals and in improving the scientific integrity and quality of proposals is invaluable assistance to a district's research department. Another district benefit is the creation of a mechanism that institutionalizes and encourages broad community participation.

The research community benefits through being provided access to information and information sources. The cooperative interaction with district staff and the community allows researchers to examine the practical utility of their proposals and their work. The involvement of district and community members should encourage the generation of more research ideas coming from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Researchers are challenged to make their work programmatic in nature and geared towards proposing positive changes for the district. No longer is a school district primarily a source of data, as the researchers role is much more directly involved in the improvement of schools.

Community members and advocacy groups benefit from direct involvement in areas in which they may not have been involved in the past. Their par-

ticipation serves as the "check and balance" to ensure that both researchers and district staff gear their studies towards concerns that are real to those who depend upon the public schools. The link between community member and researcher is minimal in many cases. The Research Cooperative changes this and gives both parties a clearer understanding of each other's needs.

Current Status of the San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative

The attempt to integrate the three groups--researchers, district practitioners, and community member/advocacy groups--is in its initial stages within the San Diego City Schools. The work on the cooperative commenced in June 1984. The first document in the appendix (A-1) was prepared in October 1984 as a rough outline of the structure of the program. The organization which has evolved thus far follows this format quite closely. A key difference is in the makeup of the research proposals review panel. Community representation on the panel now numbers three. The initial research task force was convened in November to study the achievement of Hispanic students. More than thirty individuals representing the Superintendent's Mexican-American Advisory Committee, six local universities and the district met on three separate occasions to prepare a research agenda. A working draft of the research agenda (A-2), prepared in March 1985, also is included in the appendix. A call for papers will occur in late spring with the initial projects commencing in late summer, 1985.

The Research Cooperative is an exciting idea that combines the work of individuals from different areas to help improve schools. Much of its success depends upon the relationship that develops among researchers, prac-

titioners, and community members. The cooperative creates the mechanism for positive interaction to occur, while simultaneously fulfilling the research needs of the school district. Although the results are not in as of yet, the initial developmental stages of the San Diego City Schools Research Cooperative have been quite positive and encouraging.

A1 - 10/29/84
WORKING
DOCUMENT

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

FORMATION OF A RESEARCH COOPERATIVE

Overview

The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) acknowledges the importance of educational research and accepts the responsibility of encouraging it in order to improve the quality of services to its students. The district is interested in facilitating the professional development of its staff, other graduate students, and faculty in local universities. Also SDUSD is interested in cooperating with community organizations and other individuals having a special interest in education or demonstrated skills in research.

The recent reorganization of the SDUSD established a high commitment to planning, research, and evaluation by creating a new division specifically organized for those purposes. The division now is in a position to promote the interests of colleges and universities to work more closely with the district in research endeavors. Institutions of higher learning can be very helpful to SDUSD by taking on research projects in areas that relate to district needs. This cooperative effort would bring to life the district's commitment to useful and programmatic research. Such participation also would be an expression of the district's intent to implement the Superior Court charge that the SDUSD more actively develop community-based coalitions.

Most of the research projects presently carried out in the district by university faculty and graduate students do not meet the district's needs. The topics for study usually are determined by the researcher, independently of the district. The formation of a research cooperative and the establishment of a research agenda address that problem.

Plans

With a view towards encouraging programmatic research and promoting the exchange of knowledge, the San Diego Unified School District is expanding its relationships with the six San Diego-area colleges and universities having schools of education.

A. A Research Cooperative is being formed.

It is believed that such an association can prove mutually beneficial to the public schools and institutions of higher learning. The school district in any given year desires to have studies conducted regarding certain of its educational programs, support services, etc. The universities and colleges have faculty and graduate students who have the training, experience, and desire to conduct quality research. By matching the resources and desires of the universities and the public schools, the interests of both may be served, and relationships between both institutions strengthened.

The Research Cooperative's basic composition will be a steering committee of college of education deans at the following universities: San Diego State University, National University, Point Loma College, United States International University, University of California San Diego, and the University of San Diego. They would be joined in the steering committee by the division managers of Planning, Research and Evaluation (PRE), Community Relations and Integration Services (CRISD), Educational Services and School Operations. This body should meet perhaps three or four times annually, to review the Research Cooperative's progress, exchange insights, offer suggestions for future research, etc.

B. A Research Agenda is being developed

This will lay out the areas in which the district actively seeks research. A task-force approach is the planned means for developing the agenda. Task forces will be formed for each of two or three broad areas of study which the district would have interest (and find feasible) to have studied in any given year. For example, currently (November 1984) a task force on achievement of the Hispanic students is being formed. The Superintendent's Mexican/American Education Advisory Committee has urged that Hispanic students' achievement be studied. Another task force in 1984-85 could be on the achievement of Black students participating in VEEP and magnet programs.

Each task force, initially, would be chaired by the district manager most responsible for the program or topic. Subsequently, the task force may wish to choose its chair. Membership on each task force would include Education Center and school site staff, community, university faculty, and distinguished scholars of the study topic. Collectively, the group will identify and recommend research studies of high priority to the district, both from the standpoint of importance to the district and feasibility of logistical support. The task force would specify research questions in writing, along with a discussion of 1) why the research is required; 2) what are the expected outcomes, and 3) how the products should assist the district in planning, implementing and/or evaluating its programs, services or practices. Those identified research needs would become candidates for the district's Research Agenda.

The district will have a Research Agenda Coordinating Committee to make final recommendations of the Agenda inclusions to the Superintendent.

Upon approval of the district's Research Agenda by the Superintendent, the Director of Research will publish and distribute to cooperating colleges and universities an announcement of the Research Agenda and extend a request for proposals to undertake the desired research. Qualifying criteria and processes for submitting proposals will be clearly stated. Also specified will be the level and kind of assistance the researcher may expect from the district. This agenda, then, would guide university

faculty, and other eligible groups/individuals in presenting research proposals to the school district. Research proposals of strong merit for topics not on the agenda will be entertained, as well. Because there are limits to the number of research activities the district can accommodate, though, projects on agenda will be given preference.

C. Proposals Review Panels will be formed.

Research proposals directly pursuant to the district's Research Agenda or related to its study topics will be handled by the proposals review panels (PRP). These panels would be constituted by selected persons from the respective task forces. Using research in the area of Hispanic student achievement as an example, the proposal review panel would be made up of persons from the Hispanic Student Achievement Task Force. Included would be representatives from the Mexican-American Advisory Committee; university faculty; School Operations, Community Relations and Integration Services, Educational Services and Planning, Research, and Evaluation divisions; school sites; Second Language Education and Data Systems departments. That panel of approximately nine people would review all research proposals the district receives pertaining to Hispanic students' school experiences. The proposals may or may not be directly pursuant to the Research Agenda questions, just so long as the proposals pertain to Hispanic students.

In addition to the special-topic PRPs--as that just described--there will be a general topic proposals review panel. They will review and recommend on many of the other research proposals received in the district, i.e. projects not related to any topics of the Research Agenda. This General Topic Proposals Review Panel--of approximately 7 persons--would be made up of university faculty and district staff only. For the sake of sharing the work, the membership of this particular PRP, where feasible, would not include persons serving on one of the special-topic review panels. At the discretion of the Director of Research, other non-Research Agenda related topics may be resolved by district staff, without submitting those proposals for review and recommendation by a PRP.

The PRP will review written proposals, discuss them orally with the candidate and provide (for district decision makers) written appraisals and recommendations concerning those proposals. This written, but anonymous, feedback also would be sent to the author of any proposal which was not approved. In the case of degree-seeking candidates, the suggestion will be made to the cooperating deans that the thesis/ dissertation chairperson and/or the special topic task force member from that university also receive this written feedback. Through such a process, the quality of proposal writing should be improved. The special-topic proposals review panels will meet during the first week of each month to review with the candidates orally the research proposals received in the Research Department by the 15th of the previous month. The General Topic PRP will meet the middle of each month to consider proposals received by the first of the month.

The final determination on all proposals will be made by the Assistant to the Superintendent for PRE, the Superintendent to decide appeals. A district manager will be assigned to each approved research project, providing general supervision in the conduct of the investigation.

The figure attached to this document portrays both the composition and relationships of the Research Cooperative Steering Committee, the special-topic task forces, the special-topic proposals review panels, and the General Topic Proposals Review Panel.

Eligibility of Researchers

It is expected that Research Agenda topics would be divided into at least two levels:

Priority Research would address those items having the highest research value to the district. Due to the level of research expertise, time commitment and other resources required, priority research will be accepted only from college and university faculty, post-doctoral fellows, or as part of a doctoral dissertation study by a candidate the university certifies exceptionally capable. Priority research proposals also may be accepted from qualified members of local, state or federal agencies, or local non-profit organizations with demonstrated research skills at the appropriate level.

General Research is that level of research requiring skills customarily found among more capable candidates for the master's degree. investigations at this level usually will be of short duration; may have limited application; and require research skills less well developed than required for Priority Research.

Task forces placing research topics on the Agenda would be asked in each instance to recommend the academic/professional status of persons who should be considered eligible as the "primary investigator" of a particular study. Those eligibility criteria will be included in publication of the district's Research Agenda. The primary investigator would be allowed to enlist others to aid in the research, but the responsibility for the research quality rests with the primary researcher. Among the considerations which should guide these specifications on primary investigator eligibility are the researcher expertise, professional status, and available resources the study warrants; the sensitive nature of the inquiry; and the importance of the study to the district.

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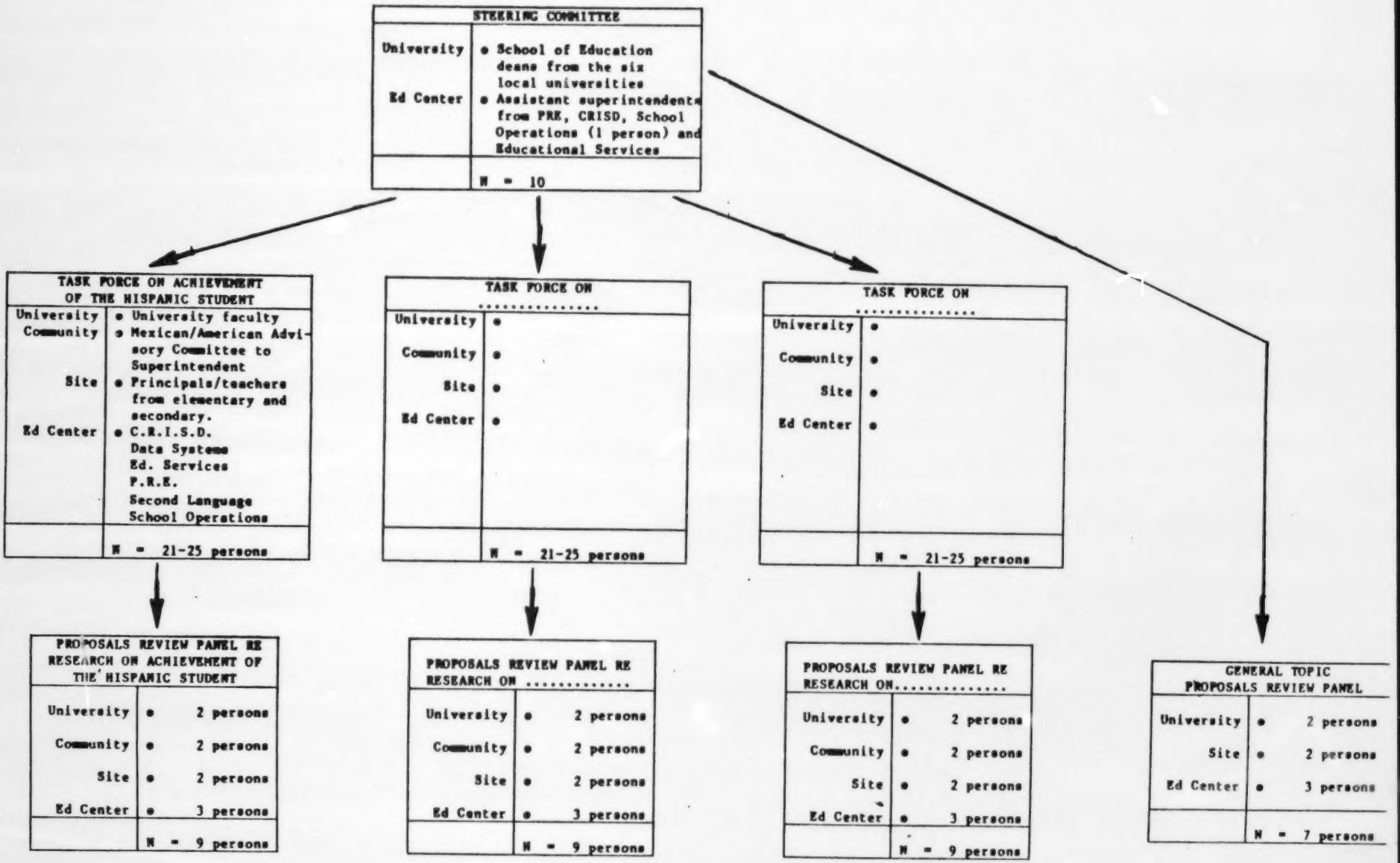
SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

RESEARCH COOPERATIVE
1984-85



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SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

-RESEARCH COOPERATIVE-

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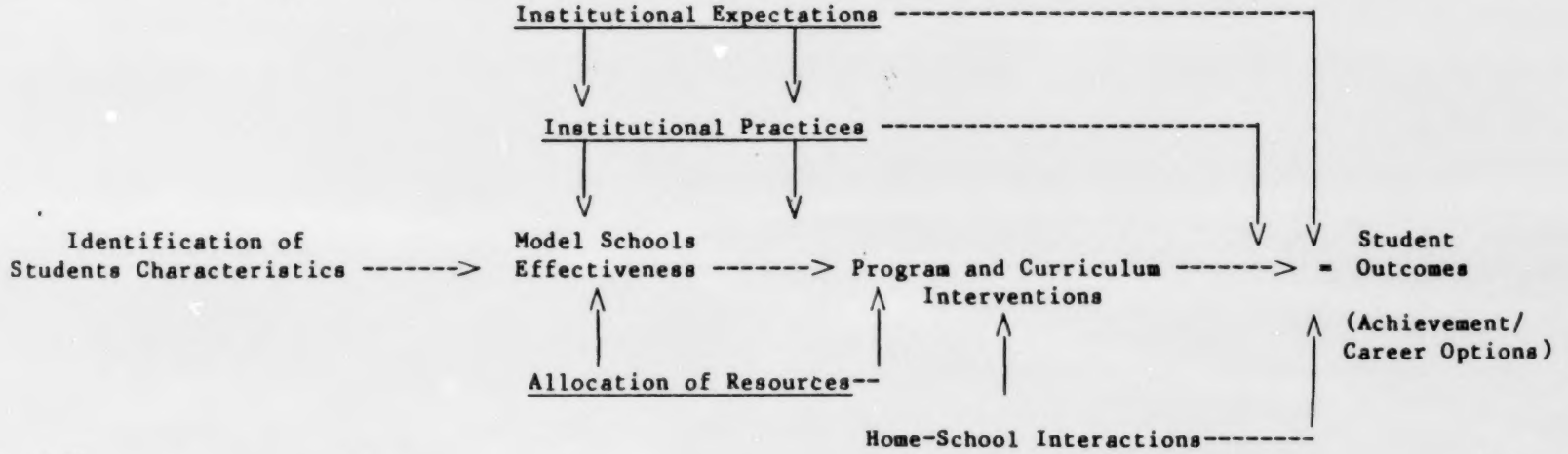
San Diego City Schools, National University, Point Loma College, San Diego State University, U. S. International University, University of California-San Diego, University of San Diego, Community Organizations

RESEARCH AGENDA FROM THE TASK FORCE ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF HISPANIC STUDENTS

The goal of the Research Cooperative Task Force on Hispanic Student Achievement and the Superintendent's Mexican-American Advisory Committee is to promote research that will enhance the education of Hispanic students and ensure that equal educational opportunities are available to all Hispanic students. Hispanic students attending city schools should attain core curriculum proficiencies and the necessary skills to enter careers and/or higher education. These essential skills include reading comprehension, inquiry, problem solving and computational skills. Research projects receiving the endorsement of the Research Cooperative will be measured against their ability to provide meaningful insights and practical application into the development of programs and policy recommendations that will benefit Hispanic students. Policy analyses examining the relationship between district policy and school/classroom implementation are encouraged.

The overall rationale for the research topics can be seen in the schematic outline below. The Research Cooperative is interested in research findings that will provide accurate information to assist district leadership in the design of programs and policies that will improve the education of Hispanic youth. Research projects must be designed to have practical application to the district by contributing to improving student outcomes. This diagram depicts.....



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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
I. Identification of Hispanic Students, Educator and Community Characteristics	a. Review of literature defining Hispanic students; review of techniques used to identify cultural and ethnic subgroups.	
	b. Who are Hispanic students? What are their characteristics? What are their educational needs? What are their linguistic needs? Are their educational and language needs being met? How can educational programs for Hispanic students be improved to meet their language and educational needs?	
II. Educational Policy and Practices	Institutional and Organizational Expectations	
	a. Institutional Expections - What are the district policies for the education of Hispanic students? Are these policies realized in practice at the district, school, and classroom levels? How are these policies realized in practice?	
	b. Administrative Leadership - What should be the role of school site administrators in addressing short-term and long-term academic and linguistic needs of their students?	
	c. Teacher Expectations - Do teachers have different expectations for the performance of children from linguistic-majority and linguistic-minority backgrounds?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
II. Educational Policy and Practices Cont'd.	**Institutional and Organizational Expectations**	
	d. Environmental School Factors - What structural resources and conditions are necessary in order to provide a safe, orderly school environment and high student achievement?	
	Institutional Practices	
	e. Identification of Students - How are Hispanic students identified and assigned to groups within classrooms or programs at sites?	
	f. Tracking Practices - If students are tracked, what is the influence on students' access to equal opportunity?	
	g. Counseling/Guidance - What counseling practices provide students with the broadest possible information as to career choices? Do students from certain groups receive advice that precludes participation in certain educational programs at a later date?	
	h. Ability Grouping - How are Hispanic students placed in classrooms? Do they receive instruction in and access to curricula which are equivalent to majority students?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
II. Educational Policy and Practices Cont'd.	i. Classroom Practices - What is the teacher's behavior toward Hispanic students as it compares to other students? What is the nature of teacher/student interaction (specifically with Hispanic students)? How is the district mandated curriculum implemented and interpreted by the classroom teacher?	
	j. Student Expections - How do teacher expectations mold student expectations? What impact do teacher expectations have on academic attainment? How do students internalize and actualize high expectations?	
	Program and Curriculum Interventions	
	k. Teaching Assignment Policies/ Staffing - What should be the competencies for any credentialed teacher working with Hispanic or ethnically diverse students? What effect do district placement practices have on students' academic performance?	
	l. Educational Quality Control - What are the on-going mechanisms for evaluating effectiveness of educational services for Hispanic and/or language minority students?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
II. Educational Policy and Practices Cont'd.	**Program and Curriculum Interventions**	
	m. Curricular Design/Instructional Program - What types of programs exist to address the academic and linguistic development of students? What instructional programs address the academic and linguistic needs and cognitive development of students in their primary and secondary language?	
	n. Identification of Students - How are Hispanic students identified and assigned to groups within classrooms or programs at sites?	
	o. Diagnostic Processes - How effective are diagnostic practices in identifying the linguistic and academic proficiency of students in their first and second language?	
	Allocation of Resources	
	p. Allocation of Material and Personnel Resources - Are there differential resource allocations for schools with language-minority populations, for example, to educational technology? If so, what are the effects on student performance? In what ways are funds used to address the underachievement of students? Are the ADA funds generated by Hispanic students used to directly affect their academic achievement?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
III. Home/School Interaction; Peer Group Involvement	a. Parental Expectations - What are Hispanic parents' expectations for their students' school performance? Do these expectations match the expectations of the schools? What school site practices promote active home/school involvement? What should be the role of parents in providing an academic and social support system for their children?	
	b. Peer Group Influences - What are the different peer group influences within the Hispanic community? What role do these influences play in contributing to the educational performance of Hispanic students?	
	c. Work Experience Opportunity - What are the effects of work experiences in increasing school holding power? What work experiences improve the academic skills and career options of students?	
IV. Model Schools and Effectiveness	a. Identification of Successful Schools Nationwide - Which schools in San Diego and throughout the country have a record of providing high quality education to Hispanic youth? What can be learned from the successful schools? What practices and programs can be emulated within the San Diego City Schools?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
IV. Model Schools and Effectiveness Cont'd.	b. Peer Group Influences - What are the different peer group influences within the Hispanic community? What role do these influences play in contributing to the educational performance of Hispanic students?	
	c. Teacher Expectations - Do teachers have different expectations for the performance of children from linguistic-majority and linguistic-minority backgrounds?	
	d. Administrative Leadership - What should be the role of school site administrators in addressing short-term and long-term academic and linguistic needs of their students?	
	e. Educational Quality Control - What are the on-going mechanisms for evaluating effectiveness of educational services for Hispanic and/or language minority students?	
	f. Environmental School Factors - What structural resources and conditions are necessary in order to provide a safe, orderly school environment and high student achievement?	
	g. School Climate - What are the characteristics of the "culture of caring?" How does the "culture of caring" support high academic expectations? What are the conditions in the "culture of caring" that must be present in all educational components in order to promote academic achievement?	

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RESEARCH TOPIC	SUGGESTED PROJECTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS
V. Independent Research Topics Pertaining to Hispanic Student Achievement	Projects dependent upon researchers' expertise.	

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